

# The Church Guardian

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## SPECIAL NOTICE.

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## CALENDAR FOR SEPTEMBER.

SEPT. 6th—14th Sunday after Trinity.

" 13th—15th Sunday after Trinity.

[NOTICE OF EMBER DAYS.]

" 16th—Ember Day.

" 18th—Ember Day.

" 19th—Ember Day.

" 20th—16th Sunday after Trinity.

" 21st—St. Matthew, Ap. E.M.

" 27th—17th Sunday after Trinity.

" 29th—St. Michael and All Angels.

## THE CHURCH AND THE AGE.

There is an inherent conservatism in human nature, which is averse to change. There is a natural disposition in individuals and in communities to keep on in the ways to which they have been accustomed. So strong is this principle that, with no disturbing element, or without the pressure of necessity, no progress would be possible. Especially is this characteristic noticed in communities which are remote from the great centres of commercial and social activity. There the people adhere to the "good old ways" of their fathers and grandfathers, not from compulsion, but from choice. For them better ways have no attraction. The fact that a thing is new, at once condemns it.

But this is only true of a community in repose. Roads are not made, inventions are not encouraged, and the only growth is the slow expansion of a lethargic body. But excite men's greed or ambition, or place before them some worthy end, and, at once, energy and activity are aroused, and lethargy is banished. Enterprise is pushed in every direction; there are experiments and failures and successes, defeats and triumphs. But the great body is moving on, and accomplishing the mission to which God has called it.

Must all the world move on, and the Church alone stand still? Must the community throb with life and energy, and the Church alone be chilled and torpid? Of one thing we may be sure: If, in an age of activity, progress, and enterprise, the Church fails to partake of the spirit of the times, she will be left behind. Men will not interest themselves in an institution which does nothing, and will permit nothing to be done.

Build a Church as they used to be built in this country, half a century ago, cold and cheerless within, and bare-like without; go back to the old way of services—a duet between

the parson and the clerk; have no weekly offertory, restrict the celebration of the Holy Communion to three or four times in the year; let the preaching consist of dry disquisitions on doctrinal themes, or of lifeless essays on the veriest common places of morality or piety; let there be no attempt made to interest the people in the Missionary work of the Church; such a church might barely exist in a non-progressive community such as we have described above, but place it in a neighborhood instinct with modern life and enterprise, and those of the community who are engaged in the business of an active age, would scorn and shun it.

But the age requires something more than activity from the Church. It demands, also, sympathy with the thought and culture of the times. The sermons of the master-preachers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are splendid specimens of pulpit-oratory, but they could hardly be preached to edification now. In style, thought, and theme, they are out of date. And what is said of preaching may, with equal truth, be affirmed of many other things pertaining to the Church, such as architecture, ritual, and music. If the Church would retain the allegiance of the masses of to-day, she must consult their tastes by such modifications of her former practice as will attract and not repel. And where such modifications involve no innovation in principle, it is not true conservatism, but stupid obstinacy, to oppose them.

The Church must keep abreast with modern thought and culture. For as the faith she holds is from God, and therefore must be true, she need not fear the discoveries of science, or the speculations of philosophy; and as that she has which is not of the faith, is but the form and texture of her garments, these she can modify according to the needs and circumstances of the day, and the field of her labors. While the wisdom of the future will be found in heeding the lessons of the past, it must be remembered that our duties are not behind, but before us.

## CLERICAL STUDIES.

The evil of insufficient learning on the part of the clergy is so formidable and pressing that we return once more to its discussion, in the hope of finding some way to abate it. No unlettered clergy can in these days retain a hold upon even its own flocks, to say nothing of winning outsiders. \* \* \* \*

In Father Curci's recent work, *Il Vaticano Regio*, wherein he deplores the mischief wrought by the ignorance of the ill-trained Italian clergy, he mentions the case of a young priest, lately ordained who was about to take charge of a country parish, and who, never having been out of leading strings since his childhood, was in great alarm as to the temptations which would beset him when thus turned loose into the world to shift for himself. "You will find study a great help and protection," said his adviser. "Study?" replied he, "What should I study for? I have passed all my examinations!" Now that unfortunate young man might stand for three-fourths of the students of our theological colleges, to say nothing of those who entered the ministry in the days before such in-

stitutions were set on foot. They have not merely no zeal and thirst for knowledge, which is perhaps the attribute of only a few in any time or place, but they absolutely detest intellectual effort of any kind, and set themselves steadily to forget all that has been perfunctorily crammed into them, so soon as they have passed their final examination. Now, in these days of competitive examinations, when every post in the civil service, and most of those in other public departments, are fenced by examinations, there is a good deal of excuse for a young man not concerning himself, after he has once got his foot on the bottom rung of the official ladder, with studies which have no conceivable relation to the work of his department. It is likely enough, for instance, that he might be fifty years in his office and never once find algebra or Greek of any practical use to him for its purposes; so that no great blame could attach to him for not keeping them up. But the studies of the clergyman, as well as those of the lawyer and the medical practitioner, have a direct bearing on his daily duties, and are indispensable to any successful, nay, to any honest, discharge of them. Just as the doctor who has forgotten all about anatomy, *materia medica*, and clinical practice, is nothing better than a cheat if he takes fees from patients whom he does not know how to treat; so the clergyman who accepts a curacy or a benefice, and receives his stipend, is a cheat if he does not keep up his studies, so as to be able to give useful teaching, and not mere unmeaning pietistic twaddle, to his flock. He is not morally one whit above the swindler who obtains goods from incautious tradesmen, and pays for them with a cheque on a bank where he has no account, or no assets. For he is getting solid cash and a good social position, in payment for which he gives only the waste paper of illiterate sermons; whereas he contracted at his ordination "to draw all his cares and studies" to his sacred office, and to be "diligent in reading of the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same."

It is no excuse whatever to allege, as some clergymen, especially in large town parishes, do, that the calls on their time are so many and incessant as to leave them no time for study. For it is their teaching office which the Church puts before them as their first and principal duty, to which all others, however important, are secondary and subordinate. And we have our Lord's own word to the effect that "every scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven. \* \* \* bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." This saying cannot mean less than that every religious teacher is bound not merely to study whatever in the past may be useful for his pupils, but keep himself abreast of the fresh stores of knowledge being constantly added to the sum of learning. If this cannot be done without giving up some other kinds of activity, then those other kinds must go, that is all. It is of much more importance that the parish priest should preach useful sermons, and hold good classes for further instruction, than that he should keep the accounts of the penny bank, or preside at the choir practice. But, in point of fact, it is bad distribution of time, rather than actual lack of time, which makes a conflict of duties apparent. It is an old and true saying that only busy people have ever time to do anything; and it is ridiculous to allege that an ordinary small country parish makes such demands on its incumbent's time that he has no leisure for reading. Indeed, the very fact of the lack of intellectual companionship and stimulus in the average rural parish makes the wise use of books far more essential than in great town charges, where the clergy come into contact with more numerous and more varied minds, and thus get to some extent brightened and sharpened up by the mere friction of society. The heavier any weight is, the longer must be the lever to move; the duller and more ignorant